

Is Your Heart Big Enough?

By Steve Klein

So much of what it means to live for Jesus is summed up in the word love. Among other things, love is an essential ingredient in the recipe for unity among believers. The body of Christ builds itself up "in love" (Eph 4:16). Love is "the bond of perfection" (Col 3:14). The love which binds us together is more than mere feeling or sentiment. It is a powerful force which inspires us to behave in specific ways (cf. 1 Cor 13:1-8). Because love "does not rejoice in iniquity," one thing it compels us to do is to correct the errors of those whom we love. Gal 6:1-2 commands the following: "Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ." In Galatians we are shown that "the law of Christ" is as a law rooted in love. Paul asserts that neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything "but faith working through love" (5:6). "Through love" we "serve one another" (5:13). "All the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" (5:14). And, "the fruit of the Spirit is love. . ." (5:22). The point is that the law of Christ is a law of love and we fulfill it by bearing one another's burdens, including helping one another overcome sin.

Paul exemplified this spirit of love in his dealings with the Corinthians. In his first letter to them, he severely rebuked the Corinthians for their errors. In his second letter, he explained that "out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote to you with many tears, not that you should be grieved, but that you might know the love which I have so abundantly for you" (2 Cor 2:4). He spoke so openly to them because his heart was "enlarged" (2 Cor 6:11). His heart was swelling with love for the Corinthians, and he could not bear to see them lose their souls.

More than anything else, we need hearts enlarged with such love - love that refuses to sit idly by and watch as brothers and sisters in Christ are overcome with sin. "And above all things have fervent love for one another, for 'love will cover a multitude of sins'" (1 Pt 4:8). It should be noted that this passage does not say that love covers sins by ignoring them. Love "covers a multitude of sins" by encouraging the sinner to repent, and by readily forgiving him when he does. "Let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins" (Jas 5:20).

Is your heart big enough to restore your fallen brother or sister?



Sunday 5:15 Kid's Class at the Building	Monday 7PM Men's Class at the Davis'	Tuesday 8 PM "Truth Seekers" at Student Center - Room 2310	Wednesday 12 Noon Ladies "Parenting" class at the Rouse's	Thursday 7PM College Class at Bob Simpson's	Friday 7 PM Singing for College Students at Craig Davis'
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Sick			
Richard Wood (Melanie Smith's Uncle)	Eli Williams (Friend of Sarah Norman)	Frank Hand (Laura Humphrey's dad)	Sandlyn Fultz (Davis Fultz's Sister)
Gloria Detmer and Carol Dickerson (Toni Herd's Sisters)	Don Lanier (Father of Greg Lanier)	Bill Rhodes (Toni Herd's Uncle)	Philip Locke (Jeremiah Johnson's Uncle)
Josie Keith (Friend of Heath Fowler)	Bob Woodie (Countess Carswell's Father)	Easton Alexander (Phillip Box's cousin's baby)	Andrew Hage-wood (Friend of Sarah Norman)
Gaylord Huffman (Jennifer Daniel's Grandfather)	Quinton Addison (April Jerkins Grandfather)	Kathryn Crawford (Hunter Crawford's Mother)	Mary Smith (Nathan Smith's Grandmother)
Gerald White (Christopher, Anna and Wesley's Father)	Dave Brown (Friend of the Lanier's)	Dale Herd (William Herd's brother)	Larry Alexander (Friend of Phillip Box)
Marty and Aubrey Meeks, Russell Dickerson (Toni Herd's Nephews)	Sam Cotton (Ken Sullivan's Grandfather)	Ann Robinson (Sharon Bailey's Mom)	Betty Bradford

February Birthdays

- 2 - Chase Harrison
- 2 - Maddie Norman
- 2 - Angela Fowler
- 3 - Shawn Oliver
- 7 - Josh Pender
- 8 - Carmen Herd
- 10 - Parker Godwin
- 10 - Pepper Humphrey
- 11 - Becky Harris
- 12 - Brad Hartsell
- 14 - Tyler Claxton
- 17 - Susan Sullivanne
- 18 - Makenzie Anderson
- 20 - Jimmy Roberts
- 20 - Joy Liu
- 21 - Carter Hunt
- 24 - Jordan Toombs
- 24 - Audra Hargett
- 26 - Jared Burton
- 28 - Shelby Freeman
- 29 - Rachel Simpson
- 30 - Amanda Stephens
- 30 - York Smith

News and Notes

- York Smith's grandfather, Orbin Smith, passed away on Friday and will be buried in Vernon on Monday.
- Our sympathy is extended to Daphene Whatley in the recent loss of a cousin and an aunt.
- If you would like to donate to the flower fund please see Yvette Rouse.
- Timothy Jones will be preaching tonight!
- We will have our monthly group meetings tonight.
- We are encouraged by the high participation of our members in our Eldership process. Let us continue to work together in this effort!

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The Auburn Beacon



Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven. (Matthew 5:16)

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The Fickleness of Man

By James P. Needham



Thoughts to Ponder

Sometimes, the people who you thought you were closest to are the people who are really strangers in the end.

Webster defines fickleness as "erratic changeableness, especially in affection." This seems to be a common proclivity of the human race. It manifests itself with a vengeance in the church, and has from the very beginning. Paul said to the Galatians, (Gal 1:6) "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel." I think the emphasis is on the word "soon." What surprised Paul was the "soonness" of their removal from the grace of Christ. They were fickle. This caused Paul to say, (Gal 4:11) "I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain," and "Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?" (Gal. 4:16). Paul was forsaken by a previous companion, Demas. (2 Tim. 2:10; Col. 4:14, Phil 1:24). Paul was forsaken by everyone while on trial in Rome (2 Tim 4:16). Jesus was betrayed into the hands of His enemies by one of his own apostles, Judas. David spoke of this in prophecy. (Psa 41:9) "Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me."

Brethren who have spoken great swelling words about one's accomplishments, can cut you off at the knees on a moment's notice. They will nit pick every little incident as a basis of severe criticism. Often if they can't find something to nit pick, they will make up something.

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A sister once criticized me for reading my Bible during a preacher's sermons (a terrible sin, somehow I thought that is what we are supposed to do. How could I have been so wrong?). If my critic could discern what I was doing during the sermon, what was she doing? Watching me? Was she listening to the sermon and watching me at the same time? Could she watch me and listen to the sermon, but I can't read my Bible and listen to the sermon? I will venture to say without any inclination to boast that I could tell her more about the sermon than she could tell

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Do You Have a Bible Question?
Call (334) 734-2133 or
E-mail:
LarryRouse@aubeacon.com

SCHEDULE OF SERVICES Sunday

Bible Class9:30 AM
Worship10:20 AM
Evening Worship 6:00 PM
Wednesday
Bible Classes.....7:00 PM

Ask about our home Bible Study Groups!

Larry Rouse
Evangelist and Editor

Check Us Out On the Internet: www.aubeacon.com

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me about it. In most cases I know what the preacher is going to say before he says it. All at once this sister refused to shake hands with me, even though we had worked together for years. It would appear from her actions that she needs to listen to the sermons rather than watching what others do.

During the institutional struggle, brethren often persuaded me to move to their troubled congregations in an effort to help them. One elder told me that my salvation might well depend upon whether I decided to move to help them in their time of trouble. I moved there, became a symbol of everything the liberals hated, was shamefully treated by the liberals, and once the trouble was settled, I was cast aside as nothing by the very brother who thought my salvation might depend upon whether I moved there. After a period of serious illness in which I almost lost my life, I moved to a troubled church and was able to help the brethren save it from being overcome with error. I was told several times that God had saved my life so I could come there to save that congregation. (I was embarrassed by such accolades). However, the time came when I was cast aside like a dirty shirt for the elders admitted that I had never preached error. The problem was that the truth had stepped on the wrong toes. Whether the preacher goes or stays often depends upon the political structure of the congregation. In congregations with elders there is often one who runs the show to whom the preacher must kowtow. In making a decision, an elder once took the floor and said, "I am the oldest elder here and I say so and so...."

In congregations without elders there is usually a person who dominates the decision making process. There is often a *Diotrophes* type (**3 Jn. 9,10**), with whom the preacher must get along. Congregational bosses want the preacher to be their "water boy." He is supposed to spend more time with them than with anyone else. He is supposed to confer with them every day, maybe have coffee with him and discuss the work of the congregation. If something has been decided in the business meeting he doesn't like, he wants to plot with the preacher on ways to negate it.

Congregations sometimes are dominated by a clique. Its members usually have been there a long time, and act like they own the church. New members are outsiders who are tolerated, but not really included. They can worship there for years and still be treated as outsiders. In almost 53 years of preaching the gospel, often under difficult circumstances, I have made many friends who have helped and encouraged me no little. On the other had I can list some brethren who once were close friends who now consider me their enemy for reasons unknown to me. This is the source of much pain and

consternation. I wish it were otherwise, but it isn't, and I don't know how to fix it.

Much of what I have discussed involves personalities and egos. Managing egos often becomes a difficult task in local churches. There are those who want to dominate; who want to be up front and to be seen. I knew of a brother who wanted to lead singing. When the elders chose a brother who could do it better, he threatened the life of the better song leader. There are others who are offended if the preacher steps on their toes, and his name becomes mud with them and they begin to lobby for his replacement. It is strange that brethren can make mistakes and stay, but one mistake and the preacher must go.

In over 50 years as a preacher and having traveled around the world, and preached in almost every state in the union, I have a pretty good insight into what goes on in local churches and among preachers. I am sad to say that there are far too many brethren, including preachers, whose dedication to the Lord and His word is suspect. There is politics in congregations, and in the brotherhood at large. Some see the church as an opportunity to feed their own egos, and pursue their personal agenda. How I wish we all would make the Lord the center of our personal and church lives. We should assemble to worship God, and nothing else. We should humbly do our part in conducting the public service, but not try to show off, or be in competition with others. As the song says, it should be "all of Thee, and none of me." However, in some cases, the Lord has to "play second fiddle" to egocentric personalities who want to make sure that they are duly noticed and acknowledged.

Preachers should preach the gospel and not try to be comedians, or story tellers. Their preaching should not be cute, entertaining, or deal with secular matters. A brother recently told me of attending a meeting in which the preacher spent the first 15 minutes talking about everything but the gospel. A preacher sitting beside him pointed to his Bible and asked, "Is he not going to use this?" Another told of attending an assembly where the preacher told 17 stories that were supposed to be funny. Some preachers should have been comedians, and others should have been politicians.

Cecil Willis and I did much work together, and became fast friends. There was often banter between us just for fun. He jokingly said to me after a sermon, "Needham, you could have done worse if you'd had more time." I fear this is a true saying of some preachers I've heard, and it appears that it gets worse as time goes on. I am afraid that some preachers don't have good study habits and their lack of preparation shows up in their pulpit work. A preacher who survives by ingratiating himself with the members by flattery, is not a gospel preacher but a time server and an hireling (**1 Th 2:5**). We should have friendship that endures because of our common faith and love for the truth.



It's Your Life, You Know

By Dee Bowman

Life is filled with perplexities, puzzlements of various sorts. It has odd turns: seemingly insignificant things sometimes turn out to be terribly significant; things that aren't supposed to work out, but sometimes do; and things that seemingly should work out, but don't. Life is a tangled web, a knotty, mostly inexplicable web. Man seeks to describe it, to explain it, and he can't. All he can do is live it.

But don't despair. There is more to life than just an inexplicable maze of un-related and un-controllable events. Actually, God made life, and it is to Him that we must turn for information concerning its proper management. Life can be a zesty, fulfilling experience, even in the face of difficulty or adversity, if it is lived in accordance with the designs of the Maker. Otherwise it's just an empty shell lived without meaning and with little genuine happiness attached to it.

First, let it be carefully observed that a life divorced from God has little meaning. Solomon paints a sordid picture of life in Ecclesiastes. He says that the sun rises and goes down over and over. He says that one generation comes and another passes away. He says that the weather forecast really doesn't change that much—that one cold front follows another, that "that which is crooked cannot be made straight and that which is wanting cannot be numbered" (**Eccl. 1:15**). Paul the Apostle echoes the same sentiment when he exclaims, "if in this world only we have hope, we are of all men most miserable (**1 Cor. 15:19**). So let it first be noted that a good life begins by getting in touch with God.

Life has meaning when it generates service. Service is the essence of life. To put oneself at the disposal of others is to bring meaning to life, to be a part of society, to bring honor to the Creator. We are "all members one of another" (**Rom. 12:5**). That means that we are joined in service to one another. We don't all have the same talent, but we all have some talent

Furthermore, life has meaning when it is pointed in the right direction. "I am the way, the truth, and the life," is Jesus' way of saying "point your life toward me or it will have no real meaning."

with which to serve. Want a fulfilling life? Put yourself at the disposal of others. Get out of yourself and get involved in serving others.

Life has meaning when it is motivated by love. Love is the divine energizer. It brings things about. It generates the motion necessary for everything from good marital relationships, to good congregations of God's people. Actually, what is not motivated by love is of little value in the ultimate reality. Love broadens,

softens, actuates, disciplines, clarifies, joins, repairs, and is behind every sort of human happiness. Love and you'll be loved. Love and you'll be blessed—even when things go wrong.

Furthermore, life has meaning when it is pointed in the right direction. "I am the way, the truth, and the life," is Jesus' way of saying "point your life toward me or it will have no real meaning." The Hebrew writer must have had this concept in mind when he said we should run the race "with patience, looking to Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith." To look in the wrong direction is disastrous, folks! You'll have a wreck for sure.

Finally, faith is the substance for giving life real meaning. A life that has been lived without any connection to the life hereafter is foolish indeed. More than that, it's a terrible waste! Even the light afflictions are made easier to bear, the disappointments easier to shoulder if there is faith in the Eternal. "Our light affliction worketh for us a far greater and eternal weight of glory, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal" (**2 Cor. 4:17-18**). You should know by now that "faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen (**Heb. 11:1**). Our faith is the basis for our hope. If we look in the right direction, we will see it—off in the distance there—eternal life. Now that's a life worth living!

